

# Explore the role of Joe Keller in the play All My Sons

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At the beginning of the play we see just from the description of Joe Keller in the stage directions as he is described as a 'business man with the imprint of the machine shop worker and boss still upon him' from this we learn that even though Keller is a man from nowhere he has achieved so much, and even though he is now the business man he still seems like the small man who started like any other person would.

From the stage directions we also learn that Keller is a complex character who is still wondering through life 'there is still wonder in many commonly known things... ' The idea of a man of low origins is reaffirmed in the stage directions again 'a peasant-like common sense' this helps to strengthen the idea that Keller is the average person (average Joe) and that he could be just like any one of us. At the end of the stage directions we are told that Keller is 'a man among men' this shows that Keller is the man of the house and the community.

We also see the strength of his character as when he describes his account after getting out of prison 'Picture it now; none of them believed I was innocent... So I get out my car, and I walk down the street. But very slow. And with a smile. The Beast! I was the Beast... ' this shows Keller as a strong character who is defiant even in the face of adversity, this also shows how Keller can manipulate things to his advantage, it also helps to establish Keller as the anti-hero.

We see Miller establishing Keller as the tragic hero as Keller is described as the average person, a very decent, hard-working man that everyone seems to get on with, but as with every tragic-hero he has a flaw which will

eventually lead to his downfall, so far we see the possible flaw as something to do with the disappearance of his son Larry “.. Larry was reported missing on November twenty-fifth, right? ”, this seems to be a something that has stuck with the family for a while but has recently come back to haunt them, with their other son Chris wanting to marry what used to be Larry's girlfriend.

The role of Keller in dramatic genre tragedy is the anti-hero as he's not the normal idea of a hero, as he's your average normal person and had to work hard to achieve what he has, he is also the tragic hero. Keller is also the protagonist as he is the main character and also the (tragic and anti) hero of the play. The functions of Keller so far is the patriarch as he is the head of the family and the head of his own business. We also see Keller's role in the plot, to bring it from the past to the present as an event from Keller's past will be brought back up to haunt him and therefore cause his downfall.

There is also Keller's relationship with his son Chris, we see that there is underlying tension as Chris once worked in the army and developed a sense of guilt for all the men that died even though he didn't and then there is the fact that Keller created parts for aeroplanes flown by soldiers and that some were faulty apparently due to the mistake of his ex-partner. But even before this we see that Chris doesn't have the same beliefs and ideals as his father (the business), when Keller worked hard and did all that for Chris so that Chris could lead a good life without worry, but Chris doesn't believe that the business is all that matters as he (after being in the army) believes that there are more important things after what he went through.

We also see tension through the fact that Chris wants to marry Ann ('Larry's girl') and that this would be wrong in anyone's eyes (especially their mothers) as they believe Larry to still be alive and for them accepting that he isn't is like accepting that Keller killed Larry (Larry was a pilot in the army) so that's where the conflicts lie. We also see Chris's need to believe in his father's innocence "(with admiration) Joe McGuts" this shows Chris's admiration for his father and how he sees him as a hero and that if anything challenged that it would wreck everything he knows.

We see that Keller is respected by others as even though after what happened with the plane parts and people still believed him to be guilty even though he was let off, but eventually after time he built back up the respect he had lost " Fourteen months later I had one of the best shops in the state again, a respected man again; bigger than ever. "

Keller's relationship with his wife seems to have tension as the stage directors indicate " Mother (pained) How could they move back? " this seems to show a conflict in their opinions and ideas; we also know that Kate cannot accept the death of her son as it would mean that Keller killed Larry and that would be unforgivable, so again we see conflict as if Larry were dead she wouldn't be able to take the pain of knowing what Keller could have done.